Sunday Sermon

A Scholarly Discourse By Rev. D. MacLaurin.

Brooklyn, N. Y.—Sunday morning the Rev. Dr. David H. MacLaurin, pastor of the Greene Avenue Baptist Church, preached on "To Know the Unknowable: a Prayer." The text was from Ephesians 17-21: "That ye, to the end that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be strong to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge." He said in the course of his sermon:

Who can know the unknowable? Is not this in the nature of a paradox? Wherein can one be so strengthened as to become able to apprehend that which is really beyond the reach of his apprehension? Has not Paul here erred in a prayer other men have made spiritual, profound and possible? Has he not introduced here something that ordinary mortals cannot grasp?

Well, I think that it will be as well for us to go slowly in our disposition to criticise him. It is not safe even to assume that these profound men know what they were about. I am convinced that Paul not only knew what he was saying since the things he said; but that he was inspired by the Holy Spirit in all his writing.

What about life? What about the duration of sentient existence? What about the continuity of that which we call ourselves? Tell us, then biologist! Perhaps the science is more exact than that of us mathematician or the man who philosophizes about time. Tell us, if you can, what is life? How then ever seen it? No—never. Have then ever heard it? Only indirectly. Canst thou tell us what it is? No? Then space must be infinite; time runs into forever and forever, and life runs into death. Is my duty based on something about all of these, and yet there is no limit to their vast extent? Has done my duty ended? Is it finished? Is it a noble exercise—it is enlarging to the mind and the heart to come into contact with concepts so sublime and inspiring as these.

So it is with this matter which Paul prays that we shall comprehend. We shall not be able to master it, and yet we can by studying it apprehend something of its immeasurable depths, something of its infinite length, something of its infinite breadth, and something of its mighty altitude. And so Paul prays that we shall be so rooted and grounded in love that we shall be able to apprehend it with all the saints, high and lowly, rich and poor, ancient and modern, the dimensions of Christ's love. Now, for the sake of clearness of thought define a few of the terms of our weighty text.

To the end that ye, being rooted and grounded in love. Love here means love toward our fellow creatures. Indeed, it means love toward God as to be Bible unless it is otherwise defined. It means the affection we should have for the men and women of earth, the people of whom we are and to whom we belong by positive proximity. He is to be a reflection of God's love for the race. Its energy is to be measured only by the energy of the Divine love. Its inclusiveness is to be limited and measured only by the inclusiveness of the Divine love.

Out of this love are the issues of life. When love is in the heart everything is here begotten. Foundations like a building which has been settled, as a vibration, never above creeks or flaws in the future through failures in the foundations.

Here, then, is the idea of the soul being as a tree, of which love is root for the noblest life. The two metaphors supplement one another—they belong to each other. The tree is rooted, gives us the idea of organic life and growth. The soul is grounded, gives us the idea of strength derived from that which is under parts. Christianity which is not rooted is always unstable. A Christian love that has not penetrated into the depths is not a love of a permanent or enduring character. At that the love of every one of us may penetrate into the very heart of God. That the wonderlls of our affections may transform themselves about that which is the Incarnate God! Then shall we be stable, then shall we grow.

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